

April 4, 2002

Dr. Joyce G. Somsak, Director
State Planning Grant Program
Office of Special Programs
HRSA Grant Application Center
901 Russell Avenue, Suite 450
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20879

Dear Dr. Somsak:

The Office of the Governor strongly endorses the Mississippi Division of Medicaid as the state agency to apply for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) *State Planning Grant* for the 2002 grant cycle. It is the philosophy of my administration, and the mission of the Division of Medicaid, to ensure that every Mississippian has access to quality healthcare.

The facts are clear; Mississippi is first in some of the worst national health statistics. Our state is first in the prevalence of diabetes, heart disease death rate, lack of breast cancer screening in women over age 50, population underserved by primary care physicians, and others. Mississippi's challenges are great, but we are committed to the improvement of the health status of all Mississippians.

Health care is a top priority for my administration and a necessity to improve the life of Mississippians. We can succeed with a healthy population. We conducted a series of health care summits during June, August and September 2001 across the state to raise awareness of the following topics affecting Mississippians: the uninsured, incidence of chronic disease, and the current health care status of our citizens. During the Governor's Health Care Summit's, national and state experts met with state leaders, legislators, health care providers and consumers to discuss solutions for the uninsured and chronic disease in Mississippi. Each summit included breakout sessions to begin dialogue around these issues and laid the foundation and groundwork for building coalitions to expand coverage to the uninsured. The summits were followed by regional public forums, held during

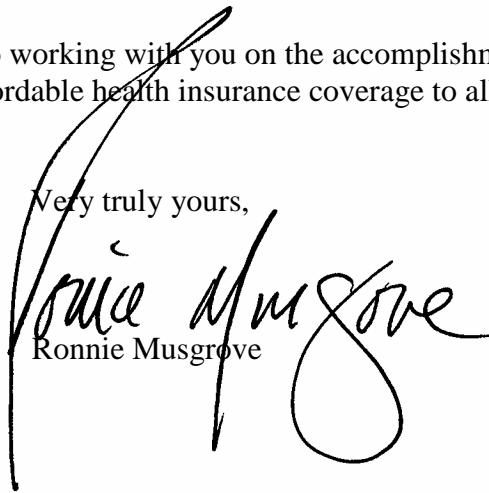
November and December 2001, attended by over 500 Mississippians representing a myriad of constituent groups.

The State Planning Grant will provide Mississippi with the needed funding to collect data related to our uninsured population, as well as the opportunity to develop a strong Health Care Reform Agenda involving consumers and public and private stakeholders throughout the process.

The outcome data, along with established, coordinated partnership's, can be developed from this grant and is vital to the success of the Mississippians' Access to Healthcare (MATH) plan for expanding healthcare coverage for all Mississippians.

I am looking forward to working with you on the accomplishment of our goal of providing access to affordable health insurance coverage to all citizens of Mississippi.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronnie Musgrove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name. It is positioned over the typed name "Ronnie Musgrove".

Ronnie Musgrove